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ABSTRACT

The 2000-2001 school year brought changes in statewide testing in Montana and in assessment requirements tied to two federal programs, Title I and Special Education. This document provides guidance to districts about their responsibilities relative to the involvement of students served by these programs in statewide assessment, describing the ways in which all students can participate in the statewide testing program. A separate document will provide information about the implementation of the alternate assessment protocol for students for whom this is the most appropriate option. Minor changes in coding and other testing procedures have been made this year; these changes are highlighted in the text with a "new" icon. The handbook contains these sections: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "Program and Policy Foundations"; (3) "Options and Accommodations To Support All Students in the Statewide Assessment"; and (4) "Coding the Test Participation of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency." Three appendixes contain a discussion of key provisions of Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, questions and answers, and questions to guide decisions about student assessment participation. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

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Montana
Office of Public Instruction

Assessment Handbook Volume 3

Accommodations and Alternate Assessment Scale

Revised January 2002

A collaborative effort of:

The Division of Special Education
The Division of Educational Opportunity and Equity
(Title I, Part A Program)
The Division of Measurement and Accountability

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Assessment Handbook
Volume 3

Accommodations and Alternate Assessment Scale

Strategies to Support the Participation of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency in Montana's Statewide Assessment

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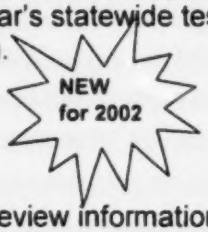
Introduction

The 2000-2001 school year brought major changes in statewide testing requirements for Montana schools. For the first time, all school districts administered the same test to all students in grades 4, 8 and 11. The Iowa Tests were selected by the Office of Public Instruction as the assessment instrument required for use by districts for the purpose of statewide testing. Riverside Publishing revised The Iowa Tests in 2001, and this version will be used in Montana for the spring 2002 testing cycle.

The previous school year also brought substantial changes in assessment requirements tied to two federal programs: Title I and Special Education. This document provides guidance to districts about their responsibilities relative to the involvement of students served by these programs in statewide assessment, describing the ways in which all students can participate in the statewide testing program. A separate manual about the implementation of Montana's Alternate Assessment Scale will provide more specific information about the implementation of this assessment protocol for the small proportion of Montana students for whom this is the most appropriate option.

Minor changes in coding and other testing procedures have been made based on the experience gained from last year's statewide testing. Changes from last year will be highlighted in the text with this icon.



The reader is also encouraged to review information provided in The ***Montana Guide for Test Coordinators and Administrators-2002*** for complete information about testing and coding procedures.

Program and Policy Foundations

Montana, like other states across the country, is actively engaged in efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning for students in communities throughout the state. When viewed as a single entity, Montana's students consistently perform well above the national average (Nielson, 2001). However, there continues to be substantial variability in student performance across districts, and many schools are challenged to meet the needs of students who are not experiencing success at school.

High Standards for All Students

Federal programs funded by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) (Title I) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provide dollars focused on students who are "at risk" for school failure or those with identified disabilities. The 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act encompassed a fundamental overhaul of the Title I program. The focus of the changes was the premise that students served by Title I must be held to the same high expectations and challenging standards that are held for other students. Under Title I, states are required to develop and implement challenging content standards, measuring student performance with assessments aligned with these standards. The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA addresses the issue of high expectations for students with disabilities through language that encourages increased access of students with disabilities to the general education curriculum, with the necessary supplementary aides and services. This addition to the federal law was stimulated, in part, by a growing body of evidence documenting disappointing postschool outcomes for students with disabilities (Peraino, 1992; Valdes, Williamson & Wagner, 1990).

As a result of these policy changes, school improvement efforts in Montana are programmatically grounded in a *single set of high standards* and expectations intended to apply to *all* students. Both Title I and IDEA have adopted regulations that allow schools flexibility in using funding to enable them to deliver supports to students with varying abilities in general education classes (ESEA, 1994, Sec. 1114). This approach reduces the fragmentation that often results from separate programs and encourages practices that provide all students with access to challenging curricula and classroom environments.

An Inclusive System of Accountability

The accountability component of standards-based reform encompasses, among other things, statewide testing. Ensuring that all students are involved in this activity flows logically from the goal that all students will achieve to high standards. If some subgroups of challenged students were simply allowed to be excused from testing, or if results for subgroups of typically low-performing student groups could not be examined, progress toward this goal would be impossible to assess. This information, along with data about other important school and student performance indicators, allows districts, schools, and individual teachers to critically examine how *all* students in the school are doing for the purposes of informing improvement efforts. An ongoing cycle of assessment, data analysis, planning, implementation, and reassessment is the foundation of a results-focused, data-driven approach to continuous school improvement.

Under Title I, each state must have in place a statewide assessment system that serves as the primary means for determining whether schools and districts receiving Title I funds are making adequate yearly progress toward educating all students to high standards by the 2000-01 school year. The IDEA 1997 also requires that all students with disabilities participate in the statewide assessment program. As a result, it is no longer permissible to ask *whether* a student should participate in district and statewide testing. The critical question for educators at this point in time is *"how do we support the involvement of all students in the testing program?"*

Legal Requirements

Requirements of the Board of Public Education in Montana relative to student assessment are contained in Chapter 56 of the Administrative Rules of Montana. The complete language of Sub-Chapter 1 is provided in Table 1 on the following pages. Federal laws, including IDEA, Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, all contain language that addresses the participation of all students in state and districtwide assessments. Appendix A contains a compilation of key citations from these sources that address student assessment. Complete documents and their associated web sites are identified in the Reference List. The Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education has also issued two guidance documents that provide clarification and answers to frequently asked questions about the involvement of students with disabilities in statewide assessment. These documents are reprinted in their entirety in Appendix B of this manual.

Table 1: Board of Public Education, Chapter 56 - Assessment, Sub-Chapter 1 - General Information

10.56.101 STUDENT ASSESSMENT. (1) By the authority of 20-2-121(12), MCA, the board of public education adopts rules for state-level assessment in the public schools and those private schools seeking accreditation.

(2) The board recognizes that the primary purpose of assessment is to serve learning. Classroom assessment is the primary means through which assessment impact instruction and learning for individuals. State-level and large-scale assessment affect learning through assisting policy decisions and assuring program quality for all students. To meet both classroom and state-level needs, state-level assessments will provide information about the proficiency level of student achievement relative to established content standards, as well as the status of Montana's schools in relation to other groups of students, states, and nations. The school and district responsibilities for assessment are identified in ARM 10.55.603.

(3) In order to obtain state-level achievement information, all accredited schools shall annually administer a single system of state-level assessments approved by the board.

(a) State-level assessments shall be administered to all students in grades four, eight, and eleven in reading, communication arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. For planning purposes, state-level assessments shall be given during a week in the spring of the year, identified by the office of public instruction a year prior to the assessment date.

(b) All state-level assessment results shall be provided to the office of public instruction and school districts in a format specified by the office of public instruction and approved by the board of public education.

(4) State-level assessment results are a part of each student's permanent records as described in ARM 10.55.2002.

(5) The office of public instruction shall provide a report of the results to the board, the legislature, and the public. Schools are encouraged to compare their results with the state results and share state-level assessment information with parents and local communities.

(6) The superintendent of public instruction is authorized to make available the reported student assessment data in compliance with confidentiality requirements of federal and state law. State-level assessment results released to the public shall be accompanied by a clear statement of the purposes of the assessments, subject areas assessed, level of measurement of the content standards, and the percent of students who participated in the assessments. The release shall include additional information to provide a fair and useful context for assessment reporting (e.g., dropout rates, mobility rates, poverty levels, district size) that will assist districts to examine their educational programs to assure effectiveness.

(7) All students shall participate in the state-level assessments. Students with disabilities or limited English proficiency (LEP) shall participate using the approved assessments, unless it is determined that a student's progress toward the content standards cannot be adequately measured with the approved assessments even when provided accommodations.

(a) For students with disabilities, the individualized education program (IEP) teams have the authority to specify accommodations to be provided, as defined in (8), for participation by the student in the state-level assessments.

(i) When an IEP team determines that an accommodation for a student's disability would still not allow for adequate measurement of the student's progress toward the content standards, the IEP team may waive using the approved state-level assessments by providing alternate assessments that are appropriate to determine the student's progress toward the content standards.

(b) For students who have been identified by a team of educators as LEP, those team members have the authority to specify accommodations to be provided, as defined in (8), for participation by the student in the state-level assessments.

(i) When the team of educators determines that an accommodation for an LEP student who has had fewer than three years of instruction in English would still not allow for adequate measurement of the student's progress toward the content standards, the team of educators may waive using the approved state-level assessments by providing alternate assessments that are appropriate to determine the student's progress toward the content standards.

(c) The office of public instruction shall provide guidance to schools concerning alternate state-level assessments.

(8) Accommodations allow students to demonstrate competence in subject matter so that state-level assessment results accurately reflect the student's achievement levels rather than limited English language development or impaired sensory or manual skills, except where those skills are the factors which the assessment purports to measure.

(a) Accommodation for state-level assessment purposes is defined as modifications similar to those used to support and accommodate the student in the instructional setting.

(b) Accommodations may include, but are not limited to extended time, small group administration, facilitator reading directions, native language support, student responding orally, or using required assistive technology.

(c) The office of public instruction shall provide guidance to schools concerning appropriate accommodations.

Options and Accommodations to Support *All* Students in the Statewide Assessment

An inclusive statewide assessment system requires participation options, the availability of a full array of supports, informed decision-making on the part of a student's instructional team, and careful documentation of the supports necessary for participation in the statewide assessment. The specific needs of students with disabilities (i.e., students with IEPs, as well as those with Section 504 plans) and students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) are discussed relative to these features of Montana's statewide assessment system.

Options for Participation

In order to evaluate progress in improving educational outcomes for all students, it is necessary to build sufficient flexibility into the assessment system to address the needs of the full spectrum of learners in the school population. This includes students who are unable to respond to standard pencil and paper measures because of issues related to physical, sensory, and cognitive skills, as well as students who are limited in English proficiency. The four participation options defined below provide the necessary flexibility to provide an avenue for all students to participate in the statewide assessment.

Option 1: The Iowa Tests with no accommodations. There are many students who are bilingual and/or receive special education services who can take The Iowa Tests along with their grade-level peers in the same manner as nonidentified students.

Option 2: The Iowa Tests with standard accommodations. Many students with learning differences can participate in The Iowa Tests *if* they are provided with some form of accommodation.

An accommodation refers to a change in the procedure for test administration that levels the playing field for a student. Accommodations are intended to neutralize the impact of a disability or language difference, enabling a student's knowledge to be measured without being penalized for these differences. Riverside Publishing has identified accommodations that have been found to have no impact on the validity of the test score. A test taken with one or more of the identified standard accommodations is reported and scored in the same manner as a test taken without standard accommodations.

Option 3: The Iowa Tests with nonstandard accommodations. Any type of accommodation that has not been identified as a standard accommodation in Option 2 is considered a nonstandard accommodation.

There are many instructional support strategies used for classroom situations that: (a) have not been examined in norming studies conducted on The Iowa Tests; or (b) clearly change what test items are measuring if they are used when taking The Iowa Tests. The need for a nonstandard accommodation does not mean that a student should be excluded from The Iowa Tests. If a student's IEP, 504 Plan, or instructional plan specifies the need for accommodations that have not been identified by the test publisher as a standard accommodation, and the team determines that these accommodations are necessary to support test participation, they can be provided to the student. The use of nonstandard accommodations requires special coding on the student's answer document. Test scores of students taking The Iowa Tests with nonstandard accommodations will not be compared with those of all other students taking the test with no accommodations or with standard accommodations.

Because the use of nonstandard accommodations results in an invalid test measure, ***any student who takes any subtest(s) of the Iowa Tests with nonstandard accommodations must have administered the corresponding subject area of the Alternate Assessment Scale.***

Because of differences in some of the test items between the Braille and print version of the IOWA tests, Montana will treat the Braille version as though it is a nonstandard version of the IOWA. Therefore, any student who takes the Braille version of the Iowa Test must also have the Alternate Assessment Scale administered. The scores of the Braille version will not be included in the statewide summary reporting. Instead, the Alternate Assessment scores will be provided in statewide summary reporting.

Option 4: Alternate Assessment Scale. This approach is intended for students who are not able to respond to The Iowa Tests even when accommodations are provided.

This testing option is available to students for whom the content of The Iowa Tests is an inappropriate measure of performance and learning. This includes a small percentage of students with disabilities, and a small percentage of LEP students who have received fewer than 3 years of instruction in English. The students participating in an alternate assessment will not literally sit down and take a test. Rather, those most familiar with a student will use multiple sources of information to evaluate individual student performance and learning relative to a set of expanded performance standards derived from the Montana Standards Framework in the areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Montana's Alternate Assessment Scale (AAS) provides a flexible

and relevant way to document the growth of students who are not appropriately evaluated with standard testing procedures and instruments.

While the requirement of an alternate assessment has not been in place long enough to document participation rates, it is estimated that approximately 10 percent of students with disabilities will participate in this form of testing (Thurlow, et al, 1998). This represents about 1 percent of the entire school population. The decision about who should participate in the alternate assessment rests with the instructional team for individual students, giving both parents and school personnel a voice about this issue. A separate manual detailing the administration procedures of the Alternate Assessment Scale is available to those responsible for students for whom this testing option is appropriate.

It is important to note that the means of student participation in the statewide assessment is not an "all or nothing" decision. It may be possible for students to take some sections of The Iowa Tests without accommodations, while requiring accommodations for other sections. Similarly, a student may be able to take some sections of The Iowa Tests with or without accommodations, but require an alternate assessment in other skill areas. Those responsible for test administration must be careful to enter coding on the student's answer sheet for each subtest that is taken in a nonstandard or alternate fashion. The section on documentation in this manual, as well as coding sections of the Test Coordinator's Manual and the Alternate Assessment Scale booklet, describe and illustrate the procedures for coding test participation.

Standard and Nonstandard Accommodations

An array of accommodations have been examined by Riverside Publishing in norming studies of The Iowa Tests. Based on this research, some support strategies have been found to have no impact on the validity or comparability of a student's test scores. Riverside Publishing identifies these as standard accommodations. Standard accommodations are identified and defined in Table 2. <u>All other accommodations are considered nonstandard</u>.

Table 2: Standard Accommodations for Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency

Approach[1]	Accommodations Identified as Standard by Riverside Publishing for The Iowa Tests
<u>Timing Accommodation</u>: **Changes in the *duration* of testing. This includes how much time is allowed, as well as how the time is organized.**	**Extended Time**. Students are given additional time to complete the test to compensate for a characteristic that results in slower performance. This includes students who require magnifiers, students with limited attention skills, those who need more time with word identification or reading, etc.

Approach[1]	Accommodations Identified as Standard by Riverside Publishing for The Iowa Tests
Setting Accommodation: **Changes in the *place* in which an assessment is given. This includes changes in testing location, as well as the conditions of the setting in which testing occurs.**	**Individual/Small Group Administration.** Students may be tested in small groups or individually. There is no minimum group size requirement for test administration. Students who need extra breaks and those who might be disruptive in a classroom-testing situation may be tested in this manner. This is also a helpful accommodation for students with limited English skills who might be intimidated or discouraged by peers who are able to work at a much faster rate. **Test Administered by ESL or Bilingual Teacher or Interpreter.** This accommodation enables the student to be tested in an environment that makes it possible for a teacher or interpreter to provide the necessary language supports that might be required by the student throughout the test.
Presentation Accommodation: **Changes in *how* an assessment is *given* to a student. This includes format alterations, procedure changes, and the use of assistive technology.**	**Large-Print Editions.** This is an enlarged edition of the same test forms as the standard test booklets. Students who use the large-print edition record their answers directly on the test booklet. Large-print tests should not be administered in a group setting unless all students in the group are using this form of the test. **Communication Support to Understand Directions.** Students may need assistance in understanding test directions, or may require directions to be clarified in some manner. These supports include manual signing, translation into a different language, or some change in the delivery of directions for the purpose of enabling the student to understand what to do. No portion of the Reading Comprehension or Vocabulary tests should be cued in any way. To do so would make the administration of the Reading Comprehension or Vocabulary tests nonstandard. **Repeated Directions.** Directions may be repeated as many times as is necessary to ensure students are clear about what they are to do. This can be done in whatever language is most readily understood by a student. **Test Read Aloud.** Students who have reading difficulties can have some or all of the test read to them so that their reading limitations do not interfere with measurement of their knowledge in other areas. This applies to all areas except Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary. No portion of the Reading Comprehension or Vocabulary tests should be read. To do so would make the administration of the Reading Comprehension or Vocabulary tests nonstandard. **Use of Assistive Technology.** There is a wide range of low and high tech supports that facilitate access to and use of test materials. Examples include: materials or equipment that magnify test materials, templates placed over test materials to assist a student in focusing on a specific section of the test page, slant boards to better display the materials for a student, etc. These represent permissible standard accommodations.

Approach[1]	Accommodations Identified as Standard by Riverside Publishing for The Iowa Tests
Response Accommodation: **Changes in *how* a student *responds* to an assessment. This includes format alteration, procedures changes, and the use of assistive technology.**	**Answers Recorded**. An assistant test administrator or proctor may record the answers of a student on the answer document if the student is unable to do so because of physical limitations. **Transferred Answers**. Responses recorded in the test booklets or entered into some type of assistive writing device should be transferred to the student's answer document in preparation for scoring. **Provision of English/Native Language Word-to-Word Dictionary**. Students may use a glossary that translates an English word to a corresponding word in their native language. **Use of Assistive Technology.** Students who routinely use some form of assistive technology for written expression are permitted to use these tools to respond to test questions. **Use of Calculator.** *Use of calculators is not an acceptable "Standard Accommodation" for the Montana Statewide Assessment. Therefore, if a student uses a calculator, it is considered to be a nonstandard accommodation.*
Scheduling Accommodation: **Changes in *when* testing occurs.**	**Rearranging Subtest Order**. Students may be given subtests in a sequence other than the one which is outlined in the Directions for Administration. This might be considered to enable a student who lacks confidence or testing experience to begin the process in an area of strength. **Modification in Time of Testing**. Changing the time a student is given a test for reasons related to a disability is permitted. This type of accommodation might be necessary for a student whose stamina or level of alertness is impacted by a disability or medication. In this situation, scheduling is arranged to coincide with the student's periods of alertness or strength.

[1]This classification reflects an organizational scheme developed by the National Center of Education Outcomes. See Thurlow, Elliott and Ysseldyke (1998) for more information.

Decisions About Test Participation

Discussion about participation in statewide testing first occurs as a part of the educational planning process for individual students. Unlike other forms of evaluation for students with disabilities, parental permission is not required for students with disabilities to participate in statewide assessment programs if parental permission is not required for the participation of students without disabilities. Montana's Chapter 56 specifies that *"state-level assessments shall be administered to all students in grades four, eight, and eleven in reading, communication arts, mathematics, science, and social studies* [Sec. 10.56.101(3)(a)].

The student's instructional team must select the form of participation that is best matched to the needs of an individual student and an understanding of the format, structure, and response demands of the test options. Furthermore, the team must understand what a particular subtest is measuring when considering potential accommodations. A student with limited reading skills can have the test read aloud in subtests that deal with subject areas *other than* reading, but this form of accommodation is not allowed in the Reading Comprehension or Vocabulary subtests because it would compromise the measurement of these skills. This distinction underscores the idea that accommodations needed by a student may vary based on the different content areas and test formats represented within the test.

For students with disabilities, program goals, objectives, and support needs are documented in the IEP or Section 504 plan. The team's decision about *how* a student will participate in testing, *what supports* are necessary to participate in testing, and *which form of assessment* is most appropriate, must be consistent with the information contained in this document. Accommodations and support strategies needed by a student in both instructional and testing situations can be found in various sections of a student's IEP.

The **Consideration of Special Factors** section of the IEP identifies four student characteristics that have the potential to impact test participation (i.e., behavioral support needs, Limited English Proficiency, communication needs, and the need for some type of assistive technology devices or services). If any of these items is checked on the IEP, the team must include recommendations about how this issue will be addressed in the Meeting Minutes and/or in other sections of the IEP document. These recommendations are likely to include supports that should be considered relative to test participation.

The **Consideration of Special Factors for Students with Blindness or Visual Impairments Only** section is the place on the IEP to document the need for instruction in Braille for some students with visual impairments. If the team does determine that instruction in this modality is necessary, a Braille version of the Iowa Tests must be ordered. See the Test Coordinator's Manual for details.

In the **Class Schedule and Summary of General Education Accommodations/Modifications** section of the IEP, specific support strategies needed by the student to benefit from instruction are identified. Any support provided to a student in the instructional setting that is a part of the student's formal educational plan must be available to the student in the testing situation.

The **Summary of Special Education/Related Services** section of the IEP is another place where special supplementary aides and services that represent instructional accommodations might be identified.

The student's **Present Level of Performance** will reflect the extent to which the student's instructional program is grounded in the general education curriculum. This, in turn, is a consideration in determining which test option is most appropriate for a student.

Finally, the **Meeting Minutes/Addendum** may contain information relevant to the team's decision about what form of test participation is appropriate for a student.

The questions below can also be used to guide an instructional team's discussion about student test participation.

- $ ***How is the student's disability or English language limitations likely to interfere with performance of this task?***
- $ ***What accommodations would assist this student to best demonstrate his/her skills and knowledge in the areas covered in the test?***
- $ ***What type of accommodations does the student routinely use for classroom instruction and testing situations?***
- $ ***How independent is the student in the use of a particular accommodation at this point in time?***
- $ ***What form of support places the least demands on the student, allowing the student to focus on the material itself rather than processing or response demands?***

These questions, placed in a checklist format that can be easily produced for use during team meeting, are reproduced in Appendix C. Based on the outcomes of this discussion, the instructional team must come to a decision about the testing option that is most appropriate. For students with disabilities, this decision is documented in the section of the IEP form titled **Participation in State/ Districtwide Assessments**.

Coding the Test Participation of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency

In this section, coding that distinguishes the participation of students with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency in the statewide assessment is highlighted. The complete procedures for coding the answer document of The Iowa Tests are detailed in the Test Coordinator's Manual that accompanies these tests. Coding procedures for the Alternate Assessment Scale (AAS) are detailed in the booklet containing the actual scales and implementation information for the AAS. Please refer to these sources for additional information.

Student Program Involvement

Students with disabilities and those identified as LEP must be so identified on the demographic page of the answer document. A code must also be filled in to indicate the length of time a student has been enrolled in the district. This information is entered in the section of the answer document labeled "PROGRAMS," located in the right section of the "Test Administrator Use Only" section of the document. Definitions of the abbreviations used in this section are provided in Table 3.

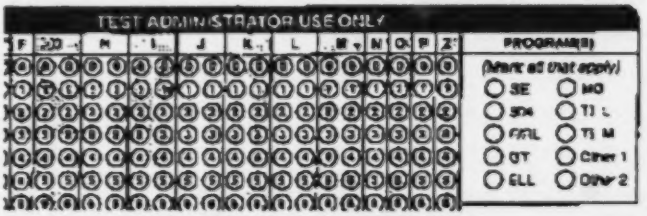


Table 3: Program Code Acronyms and Definitions

Code	Definition
SE	Special education student, identified as being disabled, who has an IEP.
504	Student identified as 504, who has a 504 plan.
F/RL	Student who is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch participation. NEW-2002 Due to the confidential nature of this designation, the ITBS/ITED answer sheet must be coded by: **(a)** a district or school building test coordinator (i.e., test coordinator), **OR (b)** the local school district official who determines free and reduced-price eligibility (i.e., school food official). See Test Coordinator's Manual for more details.

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Code	Definition
GT	Students identified and served as Gifted and Talented.
ELL	Student identified as limited English proficient. Montana observes the federal definition of limited English proficiency. Both language impact and academic achievement must be considered. A more detailed definition is provided in Appendix A.
MG	Student who has migrant status. A child is designated "migrant" and considered eligible for services under the Title 1 Part C statute if he or she meets very specific conditions extracted from the law. A detailed definition is provided in the Test Coordinators Manual.
TIL	Student received Title I services in Language Arts, Reading, or any other subject except Math in a Targeted Assistance School. **Do not** code for students in an official Title I Schoolwide Program.
TIM	Student received Title I services in Math in a Targeted Assistance School. **Do not** code for students in an official Title I Schoolwide Program.
Other 1	Student has **not** been enrolled in the school for the entire year (on or before the official Fall Enrollment Count, 10/2/01).
Other 2	Student has **not** been enrolled in the District for the entire year (on or before the official Fall Enrollment Count, 10/2/01).

Test Participation for Options 1- 4

As described in earlier sections of this document, students with disabilities and those classified as LEP may participate in the statewide assessment in one of four different ways. It is the responsibility of the Test Administrator to ensure that the form of student participation in the large-scale assessment process is accurately coded on the answer document. The person who serves this function will vary depending upon the type of test a student is taking, and the specific personnel within an individual school who are assigned testing responsibilities.

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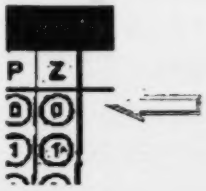
Specialized coding procedures associated with each participation option are as follows:

Option 1: The Iowa Tests with no accommodations. No additional special coding is required for students who take the test in the same manner as other students.

Option 2: The Iowa Tests with standard accommodations. Like Option 1, no additional special coding is required for students who are provided with standard accommodations.

Option 3: The Iowa Tests with nonstandard accommodations. Coding is necessary to indicate when any or all of the subtests for a student are administered with supports that are not identified on the list of standard accommodations. This includes students who take the Braille version of the test. Coding will trigger this score to be reported separately from tests taken under standard conditions. Use the procedures below to describe student participation in these circumstances:

If the student takes a Braille version of The Iowa Tests, fill in the "0" circle of Column Z in the "Test Administrator Use Only" section of the test answer document. No other coding is required since this accommodation applies to all subtests.



The use of any other form of nonstandard accommodations must be coded for all subtests that are administered in this manner. It does not matter which types of nonstandard accommodations are provided, only that the subtest was administered in a nonstandard manner. For each subtest administered with nonstandard accommodations, fill in the "Y" in the designated row of the "Office Use" section of the test answer document. **REMINDER: Any student who takes any subtest(s) of the Iowa Tests with nonstandard accommodations must have administered the corresponding subject area of the Alternate Assessment Scale. This means that Option 4 (AAS) must also be coded for this subtest. (See next section for coding instructions for the AAS.**

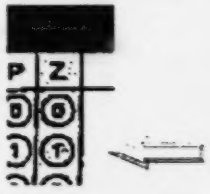
Table 4 identifies the subtest definition assigned to each row in this section of the answer document for each form of The Iowa Tests to guide coding of the use of nonstandard accommodations.

Table 4: Subtest Definitions in Office Use Section of Answer Form

ITBS	Office Use No.	ITED
Vocabulary	1	Vocabulary
Reading Comprehension	2	Reading Comprehension
Spelling	3	Language: Revising Written Materials
Capitalization	4	Spelling
Punctuation	5	Math: Concepts & Problem Solving
Usage and Expression	6	Computation
Math Concepts	7	Analysis of Social Studies Materials
Math Problem Solving	8	Analysis of Science Materials
Math Computation	9	Sources of Information
Social Studies	10	N/A
Science	11	N/A
Maps and Diagrams	12	N/A
Reference Materials	13	N/A

Option 4: Alternate Assessment Scale. For students taking the AAS, coding is entered to designate this form of test participation, and the total scores a student obtains in each subtest.

To indicate that a student was evaluated with the AAS, fill in the 1" circle in Column Z in the "Test Administrator Use Only" section of the answer document.



The total scores for each subtest of the AAS are entered in the "Test Administrator Use Only" section of the answer document, in Rows G through K. These rows contain double columns of numbers from 0-9, and are able to accommodate any score between 0 and 99.

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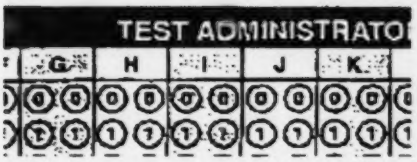

If a subtest score falls between 0 and 9, the score should be entered in a two-digit, right-justified format (e.g., 00, 01, 02, 03). The scores are to be entered in rows as follows:

Row	Subtest
G	Communication Arts - Reading score
H	Communication Arts - Writing score
I	Mathematics score
J	Social Studies score
K	Science score

Coding test participation that includes multiple test formats. It is possible that a student could take some subtests of The Iowa Tests while requiring the Alternate Assessment Scale for other subtests. In this situation, the form of The Iowa Tests that is taken should be coded in the section labeled "ITBS FORM," and a "1" would also be coded in the Z column of the "Test Administrator Use Only" section to indicate that the Alternate Assessment Scale was used. The AAS subtest score(s) would be entered for those scales administered in this manner in the appropriate column(s) in the G-K section of the "Test Administrator Use Only" section of the answer document.

General Notes. Columns on the answer form that end with a "No" circle or with an "N" have a special purpose. These circles should only be filled in when the Test Administrator erases a code and does not replace it with another. For example, if the Test Administrator erroneously entered a subscale score in column G rather than column H, the circle in column G would be erased AND the "No" circle in this column would be filled in. This prevents the scoring equipment from picking up an erasure shadow. Do not use the "No" or "N" circles for any reason other than the one just described.

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Appendix A:

Key Provisions of Title I and IDEA Large-Scale Assessment

Key Provisions of Title I and IDEA Regarding Large-Scale Assessment

Issue	Title I Citations	IDEA Citations
definition of students with disabilities	... students who are eligible for services under IDEA,as well as students who are covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Under IDEA, a student is eligible for services if the student has one of the covered impairments and because of that impairment needs special education and related services. Under Section 504 and Title II, the student is covered if the student has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities such as learning (Guidance, 1997, p. 10).	...a child (i) with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and (ii) who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (34 CFR 300.7).
definition of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	Students with limited English proficiency are "National origin minority students who cannot speak, read, write or comprehend English well enough to participate meaningfully in and benefit from the school's regular education program" (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, p. 61). Montana uses the federal definition of Limited English Proficiency [IASA, Title VII, Part E, Sec. 7501(8)]. LEP refers to: (1) individuals who were not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (2) individuals who come from environments where a language other than English is dominant; (3) individuals who are American Indian and Alaskan Natives who come from environments where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency, and who, by reason thereof, have sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny such individuals the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our society.	N/A

Issue	Title I Citations	IDEA Citations
students identified under Section 504	The student who meets the Section 504 definition of disability must be provided reasonable accommodations, which can include special education and related services if determined appropriate by the Section 504 placement team (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, p. 14).	N/A
participation of students with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in large-scale assessment	Students with disabilities must be included in state and local assessments (Guidance, 1997, p. 10). Assessments for Title I purposes focus on whether the yearly performance of each LEA and school served under Title I is enabling all children served to meet the state's student performance standards. It is important that students with disabilities be included in these assessments because they are expected to meet the same standards as other students (Guidance, 1997, p. 10). Each state plan shall ... provide for ... the inclusion of limited English proficient students who shall be assessed, to the extent practicable, in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what such students know and can do, to determine such students' mastery of skills in subjects other than English [ESEA, Sec. 1111(3)(F)(iii)]. To meet this requirement, states shall make every effort to use or develop linguistically accessible assessment measures, and they may request assistance from the Secretary if those measures are needed (Peer Review Guidance Document (1999, p. 3).	Children with disabilities are included in general state and districtwide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary (34 CFR 300.138). The requirements ... do not apply to children with disabilities who are convicted as adults under state law and incarcerated in adult prisons [34 CFR 300.311(b)]. The IDEA Amendments of 1997 place renewed emphasis on teaching children with disabilities to the general curriculum and ensuring that these children are included in state and districtwide assessments of educational achievement (Final Regulations, 1999, Attachment 1).

Issue	Title I Citations	IDEA Citations
exemption policies	Time-based blanket exemptions from state assessment (particularly for limited English proficient students) are not acceptable. Beyond allowing exemptions for students who have not been in a district for one academic year, state policies that require or permit the exemption of limited English proficient students on the basis of how long they have been in school are not acceptable under any circumstances (Cohen Memo, 2000(b), p. 4).	N/A
use of different assessment instruments for students in Title I and special education	... children participating in Title I must be part of any accountability system the State establishes for all children. Such assessment may be modified to accommodate LEP students and students with disabilities provided they meet standards of comparability (Guidance Document, 1997, p. 5).	N/A
provision of accommodations and modifications	Such assessments shall...provide for...the reasonable adaptations and accommodations for students with diverse learning needs, necessary to measure the achievement of such students relative to state content standards [ESEA, Sec. 1111(b)(3)(A)(F)(ii)]. Such assessments may be modified to accommodate LEP students and students with disabilities provided they meet standards of comparablity (Guidance, 1997, 4). The student who meets the Section 504 definition of disability must be provided reasonable accommodations, which can include special education and related services if determined appropriate by the Section 504 placement team (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, p. 14).	Children with disabilities are included in general state and districtwide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary [34 CFR 300.138(a)]. As appropriate, the state or local educational agency develops guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in state and districtwide assessment programs [34 CFR 300.138(b)(1)].

Issue	Title I Citations	IDEA Citations
type of accommodations allowed	This may be accomplished through providing appropriate accommodations in setting, scheduling, presentation, and response formats for the standard assessment, or through developing or adopting primary-language assessments or alternative assessment procedures tied to the content and performance standards (Peer Guidance, 1999, p. 12). Assessment accommodations help students show what they know without being placed at a disadvantage by their disability (Guidance, 1997, 11).	... that out-of-level testing will be considered a modified administration of a test rather than an alternative test and as such should be reported as performance at grade level at which the child is placed unless such reporting would be statistically inappropriate (Final Regulations, 1999, Attachment 1).
option of using an alternate assessment	For a small number of students with disabilities, the severity of their physical or cognitive limitations prevents them from participating meaningfully in exactly the same assessment as other students, even with the availability of appropriate accommodations. For this small population of students, appropriate alternatives should be used to assess their educational progress (Guidance, 1997, p. 11).	Section 300.138 requires the state or LEAs, as appropriate, to develop alternate assessments and guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in state and districtwide assessment programs. Alternate assessments need to be aligned with the general curriculum standards set for all students and should not be assumed appropriate only for those students with significant cognitive impairments (Final Regulations, 1999, Attachment 1). If IEP teams properly make individualized decisions about the participation of each child with a disability in general state or districtwide assessments, including the use of appropriate accommodations and modifications in administration (including individual modifications, as appropriate), it should be necessary to use alternate assessments for a relatively small percentage of children with disabilities (Final Regulations, 1999, Attachment 1).

Issue	Title I Citations	IDEA Citations
decision-making about assessment accommodations	No specific Title I regulations indicate who is to make the decision about which students with disabilities require assessment accommodations during assessments, nor how the decision is to be made (Guidance, 1997, pg. 11). Decisions should follow standard state guidelines that are consistent with IDEA requirements. For some students with disabilities, the appropriate law is the reauthorized 1997 IDEA. Other students with disabilities who are evaluated and determined to be ineligible for special education and related services under IDEA are provided reasonable accommodations in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, p. 13). Decisions on the types of assessment accommodations or adaptations provided to a student under Section 504 should be documented in the student's IEP (if the parent and school placement team have agreed upon the IEP option) or 504 Plan, and they should be closely related to procedures used in the student's instruction (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, pg. 14). The decision of how to best assess an LEP student should be based on several factors, including level of English proficiency, primary language of instruction, level of literacy in the native language, and the number of years the student has received academic instruction in English (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, p. 14).	The parents of a child with a disability are expected to be equal participants along with school personnel ... join with other participants in deciding how the child will be involved and progress in the general curriculum and participation in state and districtwide assessments (Final Regulations, 1999, Appendix A). The IEP meeting serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel, and enables them, as equal participants, to make joint, informed decisions regarding ... state and districtwide assessments; and services needed to support that involvement and participation and to achieve agreed-upon goals (Final Regulations, 1999, Appendix A). If the individual modifications necessary for a child to participate in the assessment are not known at the time of the IEP meeting, it would be necessary for a subsequent meeting to be conducted early enough to ensure that any necessary modifications are in place at the time the assessment is administered (Final Regulations, 1999, Attachment 1).

Issue	Title I Citations	IDEA Citations
reporting requirements for the state	Each state plan shall demonstrate...what constitutes adequate yearly progress of (i) any school served under this part toward enabling children to meet the state's student performance standards; and (ii) any local education agency that received funds under this part toward enabling children in schools receiving assistance under this part to meet the state's student performance standards [ESEA, 1994, Sec. 1111(b)(3)(A)(F)(ii)]. Adequate yearly progress shall be defined in a manner (i) that is consistent with guidelines established by the Secretary that result in continuous and substantial yearly improvement of each local education agency and school sufficient to achieve the goal of all children served under this part meeting the state's proficient and advanced levels of performance, particularly economically disadvantaged and limited English proficient children [ESEA, 1994, Sec. 1111(b)(2)(B)(i)]. States must monitor and collect data from school districts to ensure the proper use of alternate assessments; and they must integrate the results of alternate assessments into their accountability systems (Cohen, 2000(a), Attachment p. 3). ... the number of students exempted from testing must be reported and, as a means of encouraging schools and districts to include all students, should be integrated in the state's accountability system (Cohen Memo, 2000(b), p. 6).	The state ... will, every two years, report to the Secretary and the public on the progress of the state and of children with disabilities in the state, toward meeting the goals established ... for the performance of students with disabilities; and based on its assessment of that progress, will revise its state improvement plan [34 CFR 300.137(c)]. The state educational agency makes available to the public, and reports to the public with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children, the following: the number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments. The number of those children participating in alternate assessments, ... if doing so would be statistically sound and would not result in the disclosure of performance results identifiable to individual children [34 CFR 300.139(a)]. Reports to the public ... must include - Aggregated data that include the performance of children with disabilities together with all other children; and Disaggregated data on the performance of children with disabilities [34 CFR 300.139(b)].

Issue	Title I Citations	IDEA Citations
reporting requirements for districts and schools	Any eligible school that desires to operate a schoolwide program shall first develop...a comprehensive plan for reforming the total instructional program in the school that...provides for the collection of data on the achievement and assessment results of students disaggregated by gender, major ethnic or racial groups, limited English proficiency status, migrant students, and by children with disabilities as compared to other students, and by economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged [ESEA, Sec 1114(b)(2)(A)(v)]. Disaggregated data must be included in annual school profiles (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, pg. 4). The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that the progress of all student populations is annually and systematically monitored. This is a critical step in ensuring that all students are meeting challenging standards (Peer Reviewer Guidance, 1999, pg. 48). ... the number of students exempted from testing must be reported and, as a means of encouraging schools and districts to include all students, should be integrated in the state's accountability system (Cohen Memo, 2000, p. 6).	The local education agency shall provide the state education agency with information necessary to enable state education agency to carry out its duties under this part ... relating to the performance of children with disabilities participating in programs carried out under this part (34 CFR 300.240).

Appendix B:

OSEP Guidance Documents About Students with Disabilities and State and Districtwide Assessment

Contact Persons

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OSEP

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Directors of Special Education
Parent Training and Information Centers
Community Parent Resource Centers
Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers

FROM: Judith E. Heumann, Assistant Secretary
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

Kenneth R. Warlick, Director
Office of Special Education Programs

SUBJECT: Guidance on Including Students with Disabilities in Assessment Programs

This document is intended to present a more family-friendly version of the information originally presented in OSEP memorandum 00-24 on the provisions of IDEA 97 related to students with disabilities and State and district-wide assessments. The intended audience is primarily parents and family members of students with disabilities, but the document may also be useful to teachers and members of the public who are interested in this topic. This document contains a portion of the information presented in OSEP 00-24, selected for its relevance to parents and families and presented in less technical language.

cc: Chief State School Officers
Federal Resource Center
Independent Living Centers
Protection and Advocacy Agencies
Regional Resource Centers
RSA Regional Commissioners
National Disability Organizations

Federal Policies on Including Students with Disabilities in Assessment Programs

High expectations for students mean high expectations for teachers and schools.

Introduction

1. Why do federal laws require that children with disabilities be included in state and district-wide assessment programs?

Requirements for including children with disabilities in assessments are based on a number of federal laws. Some of the key laws are listed at the end of this memorandum. These laws recognize that assessment is often connected to student benefits such as moving to the next grade or graduating. These laws also view assessment as important in holding schools accountable for the success of all children. Because assessments are linked to benefits, excluding children with disabilities from assessments may violate these federal laws.

This memorandum focuses on two federal laws--The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("Title I"). These two laws have specific requirements for including children with disabilities in assessments. Congress added these requirements because it found that many students were not doing well enough in school to be successful as adults. Students with disabilities, minority children, migrant and homeless children, children with limited English proficiency, and children in poverty were especially at risk. For many of these children, school programs were marked by low expectations, limited accountability for results, and exposure to a poorer curriculum than was offered to other children. Congress found that "the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible."

2. How will participation in assessment programs benefit children with disabilities?

Participation of students with disabilities in state and local assessments is not participation just for the sake of participation. These assessments should help improve teaching and learning by creating high expectations and accountability for the success of all students. Participation in assessments should also promote access to the general curriculum, allowing children with disabilities to learn what other students are learning.

It is critically important that schools know how successful they are in preparing all students to meet high standards. Parents need to know this as well.

Parental Permission

3. Is parental permission required for children with disabilities to participate in state and district-wide assessment programs?

In most states, parental permission is not required for students to participate in state and local assessment programs. Whatever rules apply to non-disabled children in a state would also apply to children with disabilities.

4. Can parents choose not to have their child participate in state or district-wide assessments?

If a state lets parents of non-disabled children "opt out" of assessment programs, then parents of children with disabilities would have the same right. However, parents and students should know the consequences of opting out of state or local assessments. For example, parents should know that state and district-wide assessments can improve accountability and promote better services, while opting out may limit opportunities for moving to the next grade, graduating, or benefiting from school programs.

The IEP Process

5. What is the role of the IEP team in state or district-wide assessments?

Under IDEA, the IEP team, which always includes a parent or parent representative, determines how the child participates in state and district-wide assessments of student achievement. The IEP team cannot exempt children with disabilities from participating in these assessment programs.

6. What happens if a student with a disability cannot participate in an assessment in the usual way?

The IEP team determines if any changes in administration are needed in order for the student to participate in the assessment. These changes are called different things in different states, and federal laws use several different terms such as "accommodations" and "modifications". Basically, these terms mean changes in the way a test is presented, the way a student responds, the setting in which a student takes a test, the timing and schedule for the test, or other similar changes.

7. What happens if a student with a disability cannot participate in the assessment even with an accommodation or modification?

IDEA requires that alternate assessments must be provided for students with disabilities who cannot participate in state or district-wide assessments. Alternate assessments are discussed more fully below. If the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a state or local assessment (or part of an assessment), the IEP team states why the assessment is not appropriate for the child and how the child will be assessed.

8. What is "out-of-level" testing?

"Out-of-level" or "off-level" testing means testing students at one grade level using versions of tests that were designed for students at other grade levels. For example, a student in the 8th grade may be given a version of the test designed for the 5th grade. Some states allow out-of-level testing as an accommodation or modification. IDEA does not ban the use of out-of-level testing, but this approach has certain weaknesses. Out-of-level testing may lower expectations, prevent students from showing their full abilities, and keep students in a lower-level curriculum with limited opportunities. It may even limit opportunities for moving to the next grade or graduating with a diploma. If out-of-level tests are used, IEP teams need to think carefully about these issues. Also, if out-of-level tests are used, the scores should be converted to show the student's performance at his or her actual grade level if possible, so expectations and standards will be kept as high as possible for the student.

9. Can the IEP statement of how the child will participate in state and district-wide assessments be changed without reconvening the IEP team?

No. If the IEP team wishes to change a provision of the IEP, it must meet again to make the change.

10. Why is it important to consider the consequences of decisions about accommodations and modifications in assessments?

IDEA gives the IEP team the authority to determine what, if any, accommodations or modifications are needed in order for a child with a disability to participate in an assessment. However, state and local school agencies have the authority to determine how test scores are reported and used, and they may limit the use of test scores if certain accommodations or modifications are involved. When selecting individual accommodations and modifications, parents, students, and other IEP team members must understand how their decisions will affect the use of the scores. These decisions may affect the student's chances for such things as moving to the next grade or graduating with a regular diploma.

Alternate Assessments

11. What is an alternate assessment?

An alternate assessment is an assessment designed for students with disabilities who are unable to participate in a general assessment, even when accommodations or modifications are provided. The alternate assessment is a way for students, including those with the most significant disabilities, to participate in and benefit from assessment programs.

12. Which students should receive an alternate assessment?

The need for alternate assessments depends on the individual needs of the child, not the category of the child's disability. The alternate assessment is not just appropriate for students with

significant cognitive impairments. It is expected that only a relatively small number of students will participate in alternate assessments.

In many instances, the alternate assessment will lead to an IEP diploma or other special type of certification. However, some states may decide that the alternate assessment can be given to the very small number of difficult-to-assess students with disabilities who need the alternate assessment to earn benefits such as a regular diploma.

13. What should be the content of an alternate assessment?

Alternate assessments need to line up with the general curriculum standards set for all students. This means that these assessments should test the same broad content areas (such as communication, mathematics, social studies, science, etc.) covered in the general assessment. Alternate assessments may test additional content, including functional skills.

Reporting and Accountability

14. How are the results of assessments supposed to be reported and used?

IDEA and Title I both have requirements for how school systems must use the results of assessment programs. IDEA requires that states must set goals for themselves, and these goals must include the performance of students with disabilities on assessments, as well as drop-out and graduation rates. States must report to the federal government and the public every two years on their progress in meeting their goals.

Title I requires that states must use assessment systems to see if schools and school districts are helping all students reach high standards. Title I requires that students with disabilities must be included in these state systems, and that the scores from alternate assessments must be included.

IDEA requires states to report to the public on the performance of students with disabilities on regular and alternate assessments. These reports must be as frequent and as detailed as reports on nondisabled students. Scores for individual students with disabilities must not be revealed in these public reports. But, individual scores can be revealed in private reports to teachers and parents.

IEP teams can consider individual results from state and district-wide assessments as they develop IEPs for students with disabilities. Parents can also check public reports to help hold schools accountable for having high expectations for all students.

Key Federal Laws with Requirements Related to Assessment Programs:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504")
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA")
- Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("Title I")
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA").

MEMORANDUM

DATE:

TO: Chief State School Officers
State Directors of Special Education
State Assessment Directors
State Title I Directors

FROM: Michael Cohen
Assistant Secretary for
Elementary and Secondary Education

Judith E. Heumann
Assistant Secretary for
Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

SUBJECT: Clarification of the Role of the IEP Team in Selecting Individual Accommodations, Modifications in Administration, and Alternate Assessments for State and District-wide Assessments of Student Achievement

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 (Public Law No.105-17) gives the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team the authority to select individual accommodations and modifications in administration needed for a child with a disability to participate in State and district-wide assessments of student achievement. If the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular State or district-wide assessment of student achievement (or part of an assessment), the IEP team states how the child will be assessed.

According to OSEP/OSERS memorandum 00-24 (August 24, 2000), neither the SEA nor the LEA can limit the authority of the IEP team to select individual accommodations and modifications in administration needed for a child with a disability to participate in State and district-wide assessments of student achievement. However, the SEA or LEA must ensure that their assessments are valid, reliable, and consistent with professional and technical standards, particularly for assessments that will have important consequences for the student or the school. Thus, it is possible for an IEP team to select individual accommodations or modifications in administration that produce scores that are deemed invalid under State or local policies for purposes of reporting, accountability, or determining student benefits such as promotion or high school diplomas. Clearly, the IEP team must base all decisions regarding accommodations or modifications on a full understanding of the consequences for reporting and accountability.

Although the SEA and LEA cannot constrain the IEP team's decisions about accommodations and modifications, the SEA and LEA can provide guidelines and training to assist IEP teams in making informed decisions. Such guidelines should delineate instructions and conditions for the appropriate administration of a selected accommodation. For example, these guidelines can define the role of the scribe when the IEP team has selected dictation of answers as an accommodation, or prescribe conditions for reading test items aloud if the IEP team has selected reading test items as an accommodation. Accommodations guidelines should also clearly inform IEP teams of any implications for how scores will be reported or any consequences for students or schools resulting from the selected accommodations.

SEAs and LEAs can also monitor the use of accommodations, modifications, and alternate assessments to identify questionable patterns of use. Remedial actions may include providing additional training or support for IEP teams, parents, and students.

A number of important considerations must be examined as SEAs and LEAs endeavor to preserve the authority of IEP teams while at the same time maximizing the participation of students with disabilities in reporting, accountability, and educational benefits associated with State and district-wide assessments. One important consideration is the basis for the SEA's or LEA's determination that an accommodation or modification is invalid for a specific purpose. For example, the use of national norms as the basis for public reporting and/or school or student accountability requires that the administration conditions for the State/local assessment match those of the norm group. This is particularly problematic when the norm group does not represent a broad population, including children with disabilities, and when accommodations are not included in the norming process. Use of performance standards rather than national norms as the basis for reporting or accountability may mitigate this concern. For scores expressed as performance levels, guidelines should be provided for changes in content, test conditions, or scoring procedures that would, in effect, redefine the performance being assessed or adjust the range of performance within a level.

Another important consideration is the nature of the consequences or "stakes" connected with an assessment. If assessments are associated with high stakes for the students, such as promotion, diplomas, or access to programs, then certain legal principles would clearly apply regarding the possible denial of benefits on the basis of disability. SEAs, LEAs, and IEP teams would need to consider very carefully the basis for invalidating the student's score, the availability of less restrictive alternatives, the fairness of the process for involving and informing parents and students, the possibility of using additional evidence in lieu of a single test score, and other factors. A document entitled The Use of Tests When Making High-Stakes Decisions for Students: A Resource Guide for Educators and Policy-Makers developed by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U. S. Department of Education presents useful information on this topic.[1]

[1] This document can be obtained by telephone at 800-421-3481, by e-mail at OCR@ed.gov, or on the World Wide Web at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/testing/index.html. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call OCR's TDD number at 877-521-2172.

If assessments are associated with high stakes for teachers, schools, or systems, then States and districts should be vigilant to minimize any policy implications that provide incentives for selecting accommodations or modifications that invalidate students' scores for accountability purposes. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title I) requires that each State must have a State assessment system that serves as the primary means for determining whether schools and districts receiving Title I funds are making adequate yearly progress toward enabling all students in Title I schools to reach high standards. All students with disabilities in those schools in the grades being assessed must be included in the State assessment system, and the scores of students with disabilities must be included in the assessment system for purposes of public reporting and school and district accountability. Under Title I, State assessment systems must include, for accountability purposes, every student who has attended school within a single school district for a full academic year. And, States must explain how scores from alternate assessments are integrated into their accountability systems. To assure equitable treatment of schools under Title I, the SEA must guarantee the comparability of scores across schools and over time. This may require uniformity of some assessment procedures. The same assessment when used for different purposes might permit greater variation in assessment conditions.

A number of strategies are available to allow SEAs and LEAs to meet requirements for including students with disabilities in reporting and accountability, maintaining valid and reliable assessment results, and preserving the authority of IEP teams. For example, IDEA requires that States develop guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments, and that States also develop alternate assessments. These requirements also extend to LEAs when districtwide assessments are involved. SEAs and LEAs should develop guidelines that fully inform IEP teams, parents, and students of the appropriate uses of the alternate assessments and possible consequences of their use.

Assessment accommodations should be chosen on the basis of the individual student's needs and should generally be consistent with the accommodations provided during instruction. SEAs and LEAs should commit themselves to expanding both the use of effective accommodations and research on their impact in order to ensure the broadest range of participation in their State and district-wide assessments. Some states have successfully collaborated with test developers to expand accommodations and are collecting disaggregated data about use and impact of accommodations.

cc: Federal Resource Center
Regional Resource Centers

Appendix C:

Questions to Guide Team Decisions About Student Test Participation

Questions to Guide Team Decisions About Student Test Participation

These questions are intended to guide the team's discussion to factors that are relevant to consider in determining the way in which a student should participate in Montana's statewide assessment. Consider each area and use this information as a support to gain consensus about the best form of test participation.

Questions to Consider	Team Member Ideas
How is the student's disability or English language limitations likely to interfere with performance of this task?	
What accommodations would assist this student to best demonstrate his/her skills and knowledge in the areas covered in the test?	
What type of accommodations does the student routinely use for classroom instruction and testing situations?	
How independent is the student in the use of a particular accommodation at this point in time?	
What form of support places the least demands on the student, allowing the student to focus on the material itself rather than processing or response demands?	

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